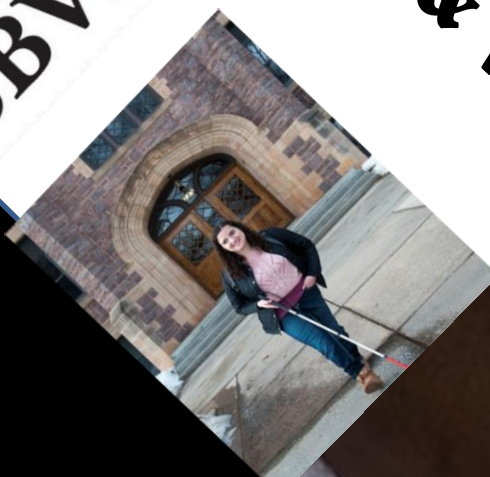


**16**

**Annual  
Report**



# **South Dakota Board of Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired**







**BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND  
VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

Hillsview Plaza, 3800 East Highway 34  
c/o 500 East Capitol Avenue

Pierre, South Dakota 57501-5070

Phone: (605) 773-4644 | TTY: (605) 773-4644

FAX: (605) 773-5483

Website: [dhs.sd.gov](http://dhs.sd.gov)

Dear Governor Daugaard:

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2016 South Dakota Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) Annual Report. I would like to acknowledge your support of Board activities including National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October and the Governor's awards recognizing employers and citizens with disabilities in the workplace. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend you for your willingness to share your personal experiences, belief in the ability of citizens with disabilities to participate in the workforce and promoting South Dakota as an "Employment First" state including supporting activities to make South Dakota State Government a model employer.

This report has been prepared in accordance to regulations stipulated by the federal Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. The report is prepared yearly to capture the impact services have on South Dakota citizens who are blind or visually impaired. This year, the report analyzes the programs and services delivered by SBVI. The report also provides snapshots of the activities conducted by the board over the last year. The comprehensive statewide needs assessment, public forums and consumer satisfaction surveys are some examples of activities that help SBVI jointly develop goals and strategies to address the needs identified.

In presenting the annual report, I would like to acknowledge the professionalism and dedication of my colleagues whose commitment makes South Dakota an even better place to live for citizens who are blind and visually impaired.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Eric Rippentrop*

Chair, Board of SBVI

CC: Rimal Desai, Rehabilitation Services Administration State Liaison  
Gloria Pearson, Secretary, Department of Human Services  
SBVI Board Member

---

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Board of SBVI Members.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Board of SBVI Committees and Meetings.....</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act .....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Board Activities .....</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Program .....</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Independent Living Program .....</b>	<b>Page 21</b>
<b>Rehabilitation Center for the Blind .....</b>	<b>Page 29</b>
<b>Business Enterprise Program.....</b>	<b>Page 35</b>
<b>SBVI Office Locations and Contact Information.....</b>	<b>Page 38</b>

---

## **Executive Summary**

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired Annual Report contains information about services including case service demographics and data, satisfaction survey results and descriptions of programs, in addition to information on Board membership and activities. We hope you find this information useful. However, discussion with members of the Board brought to light that the stories about the people who have participated in services and their perseverance in overcoming obstacles are the best measure of success. Based on this observation, success stories and comments from satisfaction surveys can be found throughout this report.

The Board of SBVI participated in and sponsored a number of events to promote employment of citizens with vision loss. Their insights and experience are assets for planning events that highlight the capabilities of South Dakotans who are blind or visually impaired. Many of the members of the Board have faced the challenges caused by vision loss. This knowledge is invaluable when planning and evaluating services provided through the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI).

In 2016 new opportunities for collaboration with core partners were identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The WIOA Unified State Plan was developed through a collaboration of new and existing partnerships. The Board of SBVI, in conjunction with the Workforce Development Council and Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, provided input and insights in the development of the plan. Goals and strategies set a course for areas of emphasis in the coming year. We look forward to strengthening partnerships with programs in the Department of Labor and Regulation as well as other entities including businesses, consumer organizations, and other stakeholders.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the commitment of the staff in the Division of SBVI. They are the ones delivering the services that impact the lives of citizens who are blind and visually impaired. Their expertise and dedication make a difference to hundreds of South Dakotans with vision loss each year.

---

## **Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired**

The Board of SBVI is the State Rehabilitation Council for the Division of SBVI as defined in the Rehabilitation Act as amended. Members are appointed by the Governor of South Dakota for three-year terms and serve in an advisory capacity to the Division of SBVI.

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Hometown</u></b>	<b><u>Representation</u></b>
Eric Rippentrop Chair	Dell Rapids	Disability Advocacy Group
Dr. Lynda O'Connor–Ohayon Vice Chair	Sioux Falls	Business and Industry
*Tim Neyhart	Pierre	Client Assistance Program
Cole Uecker	Pierre	Client Assistance Program
Gaye Mattke	Pierre	SBVI Director– Ex Officio
Connie Sullivan	Pierre	State Education Agency
*Ken Rollman	Rapid City	Disability Advocacy Group
Cheri Knispel	Rapid City	Disability Advocacy Group
Patrick Czerny	Piedmont	Community Rehab Program
*Lyle Cook	Eagle Butte	American Indian VR Services
Roberta Ecoffey	Pine Ridge	American Indian VR Services
Bruce Micheel Member at Large	Cavour	Business and Industry
Julie Briggs	Sioux Falls	Business and Industry
*Teresa Nold	Sioux Falls	Parent Connection
Tana Buresch	Sioux Falls	Parent Connection
Alan Vandenburg	Sioux Falls	VR Counselor – Ex Officio
Koni Sims	Sioux Falls	Disability Advocacy Group
Catherine Greseth	Rapid City	Business and Industry
Kay Miller	Mitchell	Business and Industry
Marcia Hultman	Pierre	Workforce Dev. Council

\*Denotes members whose terms expired during 2016

Nominations for Board vacancies are solicited from organizations representing people with disabilities, including the South Dakota Association of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota. At least fifty percent of members of the Board are blind or visually impaired as required by federal law. A majority of members are current or former recipients of SBVI services. Board member's knowledge and experience are valuable resources to the Division of SBVI.



---

## Board Committees

**Executive Committee** – The Executive Committee consists of the Board Chair, Vice Chair, and Member at Large. The Executive Committee plans agendas for Board meetings and handles decisions between regularly scheduled meetings and other activities assigned by the Board.

**Strategic Planning and Policy Development Committee** – This committee provides input on strategic planning and policy development and also evaluates state plan updates, consumer satisfaction surveys, and SBVI policy revisions. Recommendations from the committee are brought to the full Board.

**Public Relations Committee** – The Public Relations Committee recommends activities to promote the programs and services offered by SBVI and assists SBVI in designing and conducting outreach activities.

**Assistive Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC)** – ATAC is comprised of individuals who are knowledgeable about the latest innovations in assistive technology. Members advise SBVI in matters concerning assistive technology.

---

## Board Meetings

The Board meets as often as necessary (determined by the Chairperson in cooperation with the Director of SBVI), but at least four times per year. Meetings during the report period were held on the following dates and locations:

December 4, 2015, Pierre, SD	February 26, 2016, Pierre, SD
June 10, 2016, Sioux Falls, SD	September 22 and 23, 2016, Pierre, SD

Meetings are open to the public and held at accessible locations. Meetings are



announced via the SBVI website, in the VISIONS newsletter, on the State of South Dakota news website, and through a variety of publications throughout the state. Meeting dates are determined by the Board; agendas and minutes are posted on the SBVI website at:

[dhs.sd.gov/servicetotheblind/boardofsbvi.aspx](http://dhs.sd.gov/servicetotheblind/boardofsbvi.aspx)  
and at the Open Government Board Portal at:  
<http://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov>

Topics related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act were a standing agenda item for meetings in 2016. Training on WIOA regulations was provided at a joint meeting with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation.

---

---

## **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

The South Dakota Core Partner Alignment Consortium (CPAC) began meeting formally after the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law in July 2014 to discuss implementation of the WIOA and jointly participated in training opportunities, including webinars and conference calls. Membership of the Consortium includes representatives from workforce development, adult education and literacy, youth programs, and vocational rehabilitation. The CPAC members began meeting to jointly develop the South Dakota WIOA Unified Plan. In addition, members are responsible for development of policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the WIOA and are also in positions to ensure implementation at the local level. The goal of the CPAC is to ensure seamless access to workforce services while upholding the responsibilities of each of the programs represented.

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) and the Divisions of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and of Rehabilitation Services, have established organizational relationships and identified responsibilities and activities between DLR and vocational rehabilitation. The roles of vocational rehabilitation in the workforce system include the following:

- Provide comprehensive services designed to assist the unemployed citizens of the State of South Dakota in obtaining gainful employment;
- Support the underemployed citizens of the state in preparing for a new and more rewarding career;
- Provide the youth of South Dakota with a positive introduction into the world of work and subsequently providing follow-up and guidance to youth once they enter the workforce;
- Provide universal access to all customers, including those with special needs or barriers to employment;
- Provide customer choice in the way services are accessed, and in the services themselves, based on individual need;
- Allow integrated services through a planning process at the state and local levels, coordinate activities and services for customers, and share information and client data;
- Be fully aware of the role each partner has within the system and to understand the services each partner provides.

SBVI vocational rehabilitation counselors use person-centered practices to work collaboratively with eligible individuals for service delivery. Integrated resource teams meet with job seekers with disabilities to coordinate services, including core programs and other partner programs.

Vocational rehabilitation proactively engages with businesses to identify their workforce needs and promote the hiring of people with disabilities. Formal program evaluation guidance is used to ensure the continuous data analysis and program improvement of the vocational rehabilitation program. Core programs share training resources to develop personnel expertise on all components of the workforce



development system. In order to respond to high demand economic sectors in South Dakota, the vocational rehabilitation agencies work with businesses and providers to develop a training and placement program for people with disabilities. This program is designed to address sector workforce shortages in high demand occupations that are identified in this state plan.

SBVI works with the DRS Business Specialist as a single point of contact for businesses that would like technical assistance on employing people with disabilities. This position represents both designated state units in South Dakota and promotes hiring people with disabilities as an option for businesses who are looking for a reliable workforce.

Core partner meetings were held at five locations across South Dakota to bring professionals from the WIOA core programs together at the local level. These meetings addressed the role of all partners, including vocational rehabilitation counselors, in the WIOA One Stop Delivery System. This model will continue at the local level with representatives of the four core programs. Integrated Resource Teams have been implemented based on the Disability Employment Initiative model. These teams use a person-centered approach to assist job seekers with disabilities.

Business engagement teams are in place at the local level to strengthen cross-agency partnerships and to engage businesses. This model supports interaction and collaboration between workforce development partners and the business community, including business led organizations like the South Dakota Retailers Association, the Society for Human Resource Managers, and Chambers of Commerce. The opportunity for an open line of communication for addressing industry demands for skills and preparing citizens for successful career paths will help to sustain and expand business partnerships.

The South Dakota Retailers Association (SDRA) was selected to participate in a pilot project in 2016, aimed at increasing workplace inclusion of people with disabilities. Through this program, called "Getting Down to Business," they are partnering with the South Dakota Department of Human Services (including SBVI), the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, and the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to provide information to employers about employing people with disabilities.

Due to new mandates in the WIOA, SBVI worked with the Board to develop materials (brochure and banner stand) to promote pre-employment transition services to students with vision loss, their family members and educators. The brochure is distributed to school personnel, students and parents by SBVI Rehabilitation Counselors and the Transition Specialist at the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The banner stand is displayed at events to promote transition services for South Dakota students with vision loss.



---

## **Governor's Awards for Employment of People with Disabilities**

Governor Dennis Daugaard presented the 2016 Governor's Awards to South Dakota businesses and workers who have contributed to the employment of people with disabilities on September 13. Eric Rippentrop represented the Board of SBVI on the Governor's Awards Committee, along with members of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation. The committee selects recipients for Governor's awards from nominations submitted by a variety of organizations and individuals. Aaron Reddy was nominated by Julaine Arient-Rollman, SBVI Senior Rehabilitation Counselor, and was presented with the Outstanding Employee with a Disability Award.



---

## **White Cane Awareness Day**

A White Cane Day Awareness Event was held in Sioux Falls, SD on October 22. Chelle Hart and Mary Carroll (SBVI Rehabilitation Teachers) teamed up to provide a welcome and introduced the speakers including the following individuals:

- Greg Jamison, former Sioux Falls City Commissioner, talked about his experience being under blindfold during a previous walk, and the city's commitment to ensure travelers who use canes/guide dogs are safe in the community.
- Lorne Lane (a veteran from Sioux City) spoke about his experiences using a white cane.
- Ryan Odland (Helen Keller Regional Representative) spoke about his experience being deaf-blind and use of the white cane.



Following the presentations there was a White Cane Day Walk which began at China Express, and proceeded several blocks on 41st Street. There were 78 participants, including a group of transition age students from the SD School for the Blind and the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, SBVI Board members and staff, and two Sioux Falls KFSY newscasters who chose to participate in the walk while wearing blindfolds. The Board of SBVI sponsored the event by covering costs of sign language interpreters who provided interpreter services for participants.



---

## **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Activities**

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), the Board of SBVI, and the respective divisions in the Department of Human Services plan activities in communities across



the state in October to increase awareness of the capabilities of citizens with disabilities to work. The Board of SBVI voted to contribute to the events in 2016; Catherine Greseth and Julie Briggs, members of the Board of SBVI, served on the NDEAM committee that approved activities and funding for the events. Nine events were held in communities across the state targeting employers and included recognition for employment of people with disabilities with the theme #InclusionWorks. Local human resource manager's organizations, Mayor's Committees, and Tribal Government were included in planning and participation in the events in

many communities. Governor Dugaard presented at the event in Pierre, promoting employment of South Dakotan's with disabilities.

---

## **Barrier Awareness Day**

The Board of SBVI sponsored Barrier Awareness Day in Aberdeen, SD. This is an annual event attended by 5th grade elementary students, which gives them an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the barriers, both structurally and attitudinally, that people with disabilities experience each day. Barrier Awareness Day has been an annual event for over 20 years. Around 400 people gathered to gain knowledge about how to assist someone with a disability and to learn what it would be like to live with a disability.



---

## **Dare to Dream Conference**

The Board of SBVI sponsored the Dare to Dream Conference in Rapid City, SD on October 15. The event offered sessions on a variety of topics of interest to individuals with disabilities, their family members, and professionals. The conference hosted 97 attendees; forty five percent were individuals with disabilities, fifteen percent were family members/caregivers and forty percent were professionals. Master of Ceremonies for the event was Catherine Greseth, Executive Director of the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills and a member of the Board of SBVI, who has a visual impairment.

---



---

## **SBVI Public Forums**

Public forums and disability summits are planned to share information and obtain input on services and needs of citizens with vision loss. Information obtained through public input is used to re-evaluate goals and strategies in the state plan. The Board of SBVI recommends sites and formats for the meetings as well as topics to be prioritized for discussion. Board members facilitated each of the meetings; based on advice from the Board, consumer organizations promote and host the meetings. They also provide local transportation for the meetings.



In addition to the meetings held with the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation and the Division of Rehabilitation Service to address the WIOA Unified State Plan, the Board recommended public meetings be held in Rapid City in conjunction with the National Federation of the Blind State Convention and in Aberdeen during the South Dakota Association of the Blind Convention.

Twenty-five people were in attendance for the public forum held in April during the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota Annual Convention. In addition to an overview of activities related to WIOA, the main topic of discussion was assistive technology. Participants shared information on how devices and applications helped them to access information at work and in their homes.

The South Dakota Association of the Blind (SDAB) hosted a facilitated discussion with David Miller - SDAB President, and Gaye Mattke - SBVI Director, for a public forum in conjunction with their annual convention. SDAB members and guests were invited to ask questions or provide input during the hour-long session. Over twenty-five people were in attendance.

---

## **Future Priorities**

The Division of SBVI will continue to partner with Board members to prioritize activities to address goals and strategies identified in the Unified State Plan in 2017. Engaging business, prioritizing pre-employment transition services, and strengthening partnerships with core partners will continue to be a focus. We will strive to strengthen partnerships to enhance services for citizens with vision loss, including businesses and workforce partners in the Department of Labor and Regulation and the Department of Education. Promoting competitive, integrated employment of citizens with significant vision loss and educating employers on the capabilities of citizens who are blind or have a significant visual impairment will continue to be a focus for the Board.

---

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program provides individualized rehabilitation services that result in optimal employment outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired. Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provide specialized services throughout the State of South Dakota.

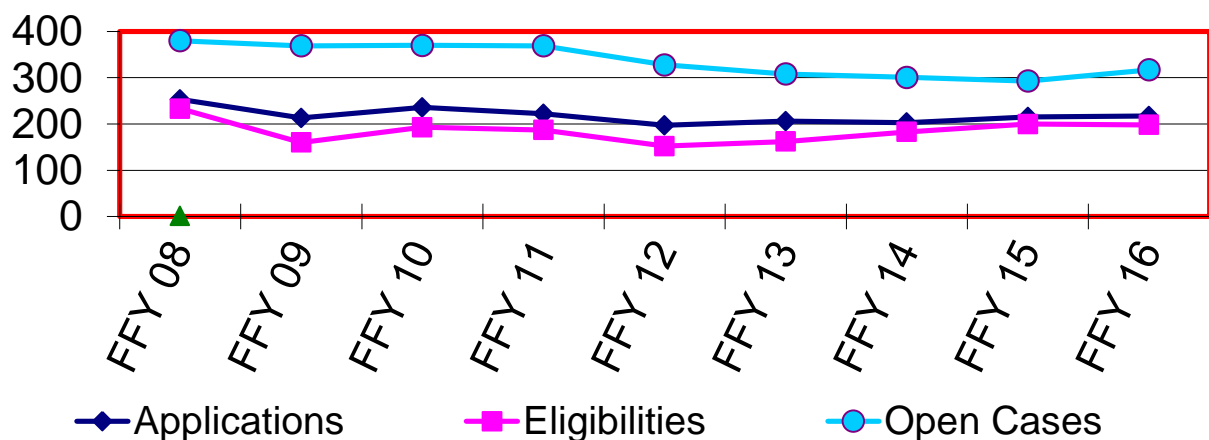
### Fiscal Year 2016 Performance

- 509 people were served through the SBVI VR Program during Federal Fiscal Year 2016 (FY 16) compared to 517 people in 2015 (FY 15).
- 115 people were successfully rehabilitated through the vocational rehabilitation program. Of the people who were closed successfully, 99% had significant disabilities.
- The average hourly wage was \$13.17 for people who obtained and/or maintained employment through the vocational rehabilitation program.

---

### SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Caseload Summary

The chart below illustrates the number of people who have applied for and/or received services from the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program over the past several years. SBVI caseloads remain comparable to the prior eight years. Counselors are increasing outreach efforts to schools and other public and private sectors in an effort to provide awareness of SBVI services and increase the number of people receiving services.



---

***“Wonderful person - very nice - followed up with me and did everything she could to help me! Very professional and pleasant! Was already employed but had issues with my eyes.”***

---

---

## Federal Program Evaluation Standards

The Federal Government measures vocational rehabilitation agency performance in part by using six “Standard 1” performance indicators. SBVI’s performance on each indicator is illustrated on the corresponding chart.

### Standard 1: Employment Outcomes

- 1.1 The number of successful case closures compared to the preceding two years’ number of successful closures.
- 1.2 The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the performance period who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services.
- 1.3 The percentage of consumers who exit the SBVI VR Program in competitive employment at or above the state minimum wage.
- 1.4 The percentage of individuals who have significant disabilities who obtain competitive employment at or above the state minimum wage.
- 1.5 The ratio of average hourly earnings of all individuals successfully closed to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state.
- 1.6 The difference in the percentage of individuals at application versus closure who reported their income as the largest single source of support.

#### FFY16 SBVI Performance on Standard 1 Performance Indicators

Indicator	Minimum Requirement	Division Performance
Standard 1: Employment Outcomes	Meet 4 of the 6 Indicators	4 of the 6 Indicators Were Met
Indicator 1.1	245	238
Indicator 1.2	68.90%	77.18%
Indicator 1.3	35.40%	100.00%
Indicator 1.4	89.00%	99.13%
Indicator 1.5	\$9.57	\$12.73
Indicator 1.6	30.40%	26.96%

These performance measures are no longer being tracked by Rehabilitation Services Administration due to the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) new performance measures.

---

## **WIOA Federal Performance Measures**

Effective July 1, 2017, SBVI will be tracking the performance indicators listed below in order to meet new performance measures required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). SBVI does not yet have a minimum required measure for these indicators, as the first two years will be used for collection of data to propose an expected level of performance. Following the proposal, SBVI will negotiate with RSA to set target levels. This process of negotiating targets will be done annually, so each year may have different expected levels of performance.

Instead of submitting this data once annually as had been the norm, beginning July 1, 2017, this data on all open and closed cases from the most current quarter will need to be submitted to RSA within 45 days from the end of the quarter.

### **Primary Performance Indicators for Core Programs**

For WIOA core programs, States must report the results of primary performance indicators set forth at section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA:

1. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
2. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
3. The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
4. The percentage of program participants who obtained a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program. For those participants who obtained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, the participant must also have obtained or retained employment or be in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within 1 year after exit from the program;
5. The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
6. The indicator(s) of effectiveness in serving employers.

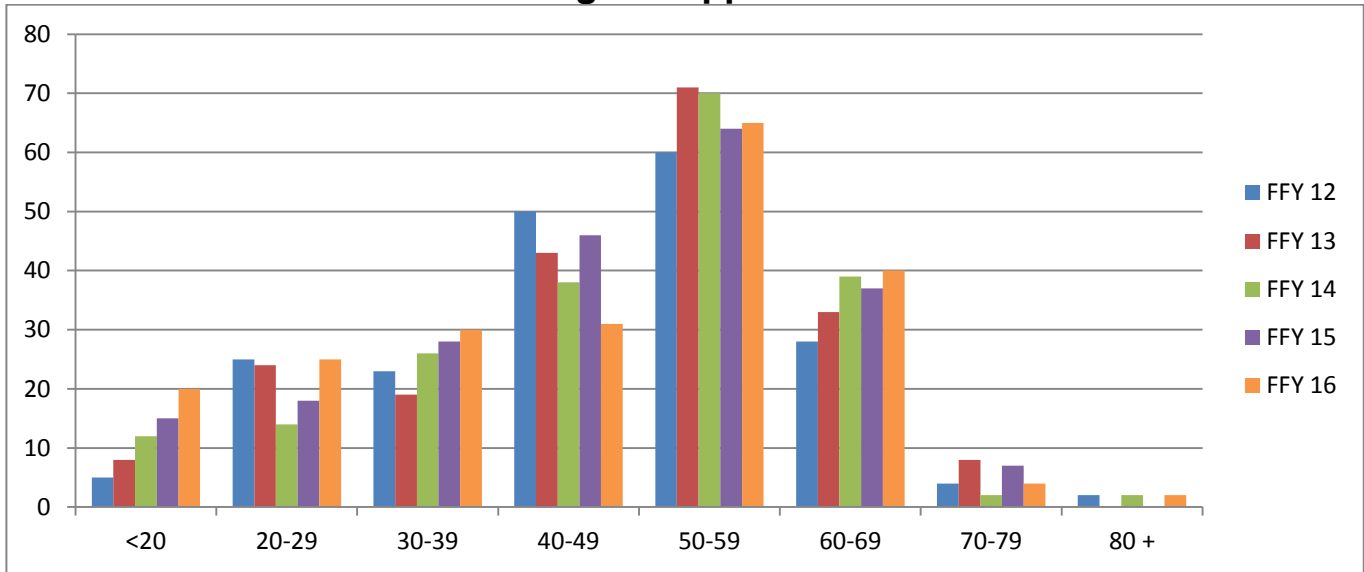
---

***“This program was a true blessing! Thank you so deeply much from the bottom of my heart to your amazing team, especially my counselor. Most blessed amazing woman I have ever met.”***

---

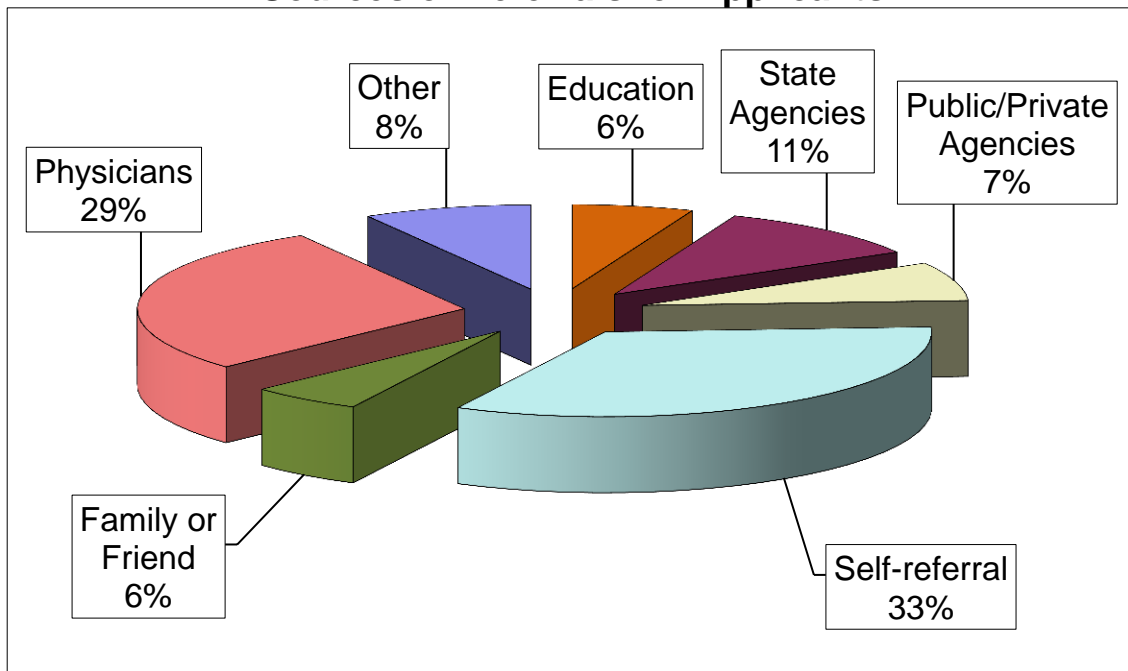


### Age of Applicants

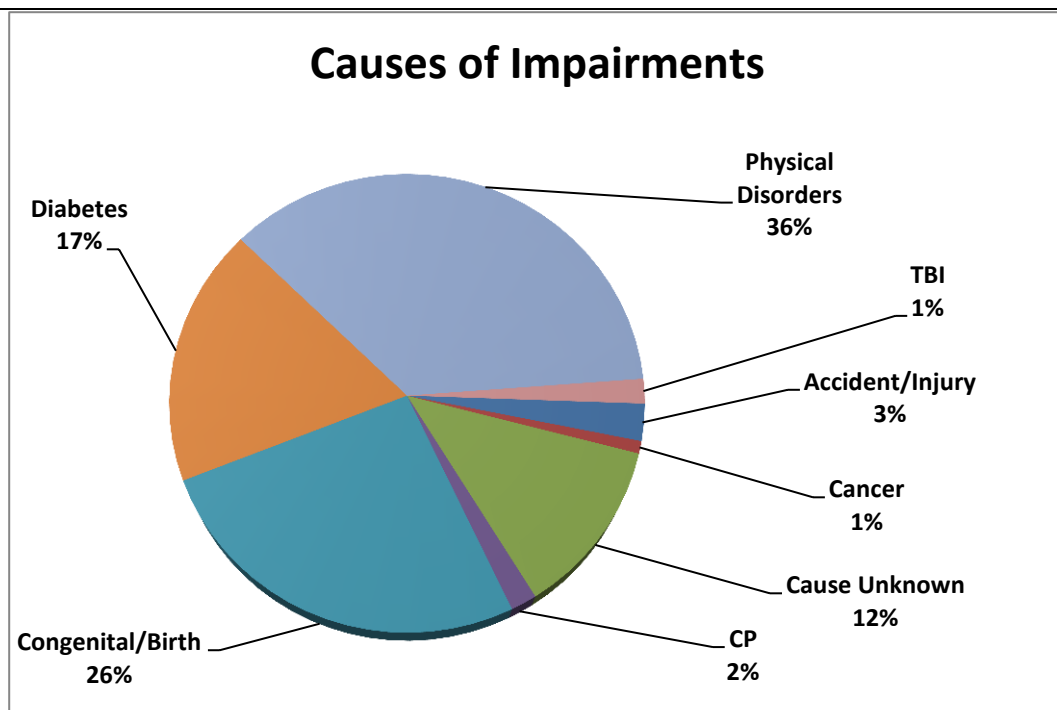


This graph illustrates the age groups of applicants for the VR program. Although SBVI takes applications from individuals from age 14 on, historically the majority of applicants who apply for services are between the ages of 50 to 59 due to the progressive nature of vision loss. There has been continued increase of applicants under the age of 40.

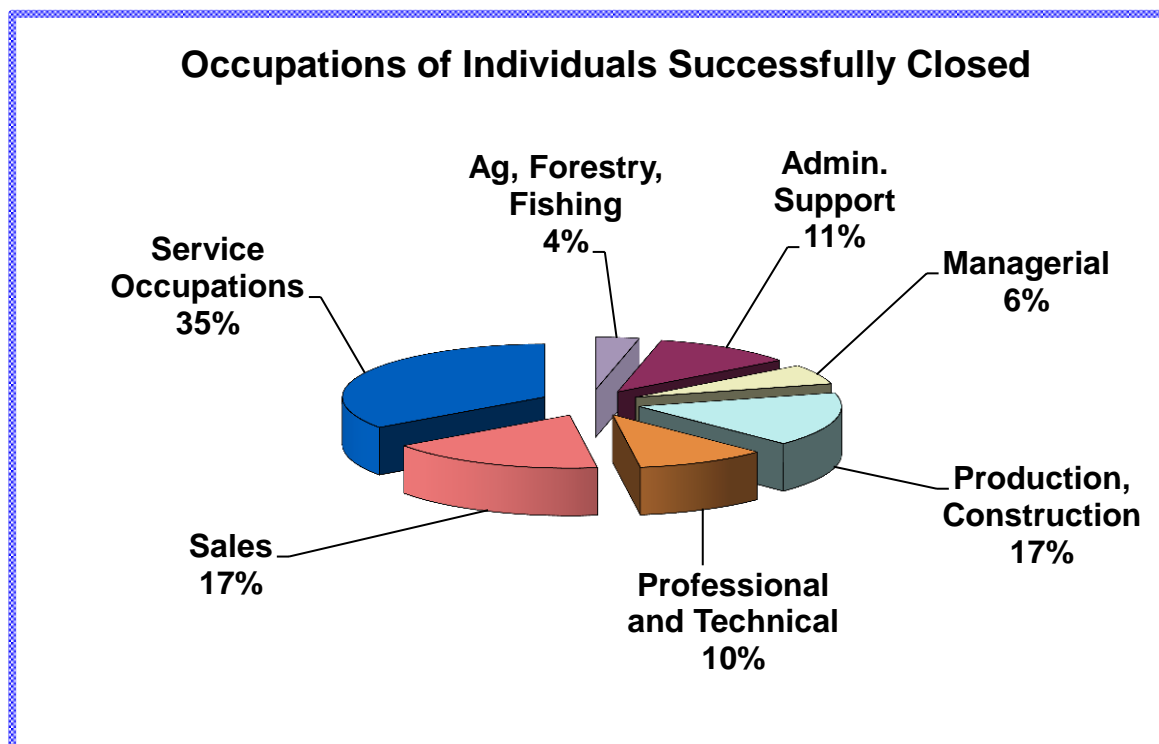
### Sources of Referrals for Applicants



This chart demonstrates physicians and self-referrals make up two-thirds of the referrals to the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program; in contrast six percent of the referrals came from high school or post-secondary education. SBVI staff will continue to increase outreach efforts to school personnel and parents to inform them of the availability of transition services for students with vision loss.



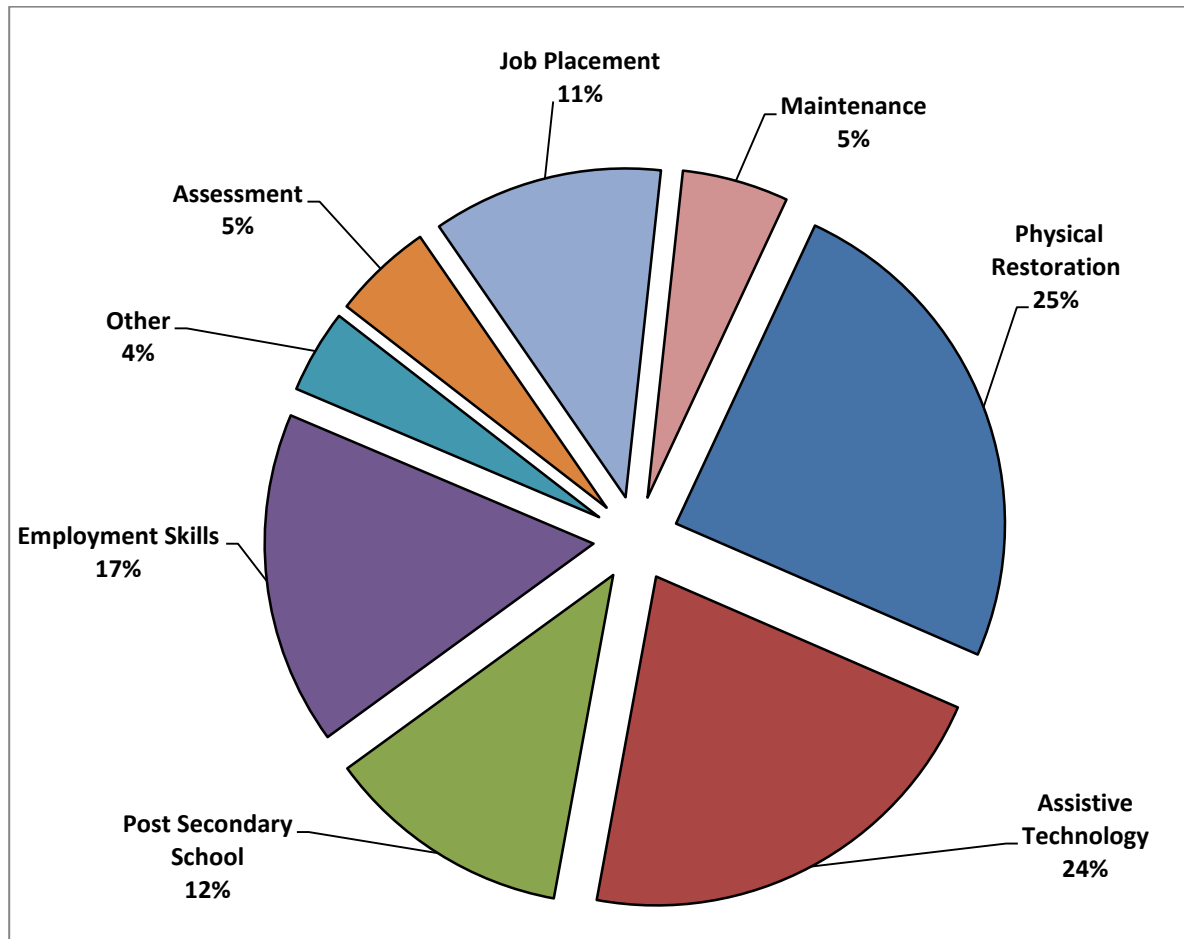
For those VR clients who were closed successfully rehabilitated, the cause of visual impairment for a majority of the cases was due largely to a physical disorder, a congenital cause or birth injury, or diabetes.



The Vocational Rehabilitation program helped 115 people to achieve their employment goals. This chart reflects the occupations of people who were successfully employed with a majority of jobs in Service, Sales and Production/ Construction (69%). The occupations in sales increased by 14% compared to FY 2015.

---

## Vocational Rehabilitation Purchased Services Analysis



In FFY 2016, SBVI spent over \$1,272,000 on client services for vocational rehabilitation. Physical restoration and assistive technology services and devices constituted close to half of the case service expenditures. Physical restoration services are often necessary to prevent further deterioration of vision resulting in options for maximizing use of residual vision. Assistive technology services and devices are integral for accessing information in a wide variety of occupations and for postsecondary education.

## Services to Minorities



According to the 2010 census, South Dakota's minority (non-white) population was 14.1%. The largest minority group in South Dakota involves American Indians from nine South Dakota Tribes making up 8.8% (2010 U.S. Census) of the state's total population. In FY 2016, 15% of SBVI closures were comprised of individuals of American Indian descent, an increase of 3% from last year, and 21% of all closures reported coming from a minority background, which exceeds census data for minorities in the population of the state.

The Board and Division of SBVI work to address culturally relevant services for minority populations through a number of initiatives. The Director of the Oglala Sioux Tribe Vocational Rehabilitation Program is a member of the Board of SBVI. The newly developed WIOA Unified Plan specifically identifies areas of concern that arose from analysis of the needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities and/or have been unserved or underserved:

- Employer Public Outreach/Education -Public education targeted to language and cultural sensitivity as needed to better serve the unserved or underserved.
- Services for Native Americans -Collaboration, local education events, information/ referral, economic development, more appropriate provider services, and cultural awareness.
- Transition Services-Address disengagement rates for high school exiters which remain disproportionately high for high school dropouts, exiters labeled ED, American Indians, and Hispanic persons.
- Self-Advocacy Skills- Expressions of need to assist minority persons with the most significant disabilities to effectively represent their own needs in social and work settings.
- Cultural Understanding-The need for South Dakota citizens to better understand the implications and requirements of the cultures of the minorities who share the state.



A radio ad promoting SBVI services in Lakota for Native Americans on the state's Tribal lands is distributed to support outreach. Bi-annual State and Tribal VR meetings are conducted for information sharing and to identify and address specific needs and concerns. Staff also participated in National Disabilities Awareness Month Disability Summit in Eagle Butte in October.

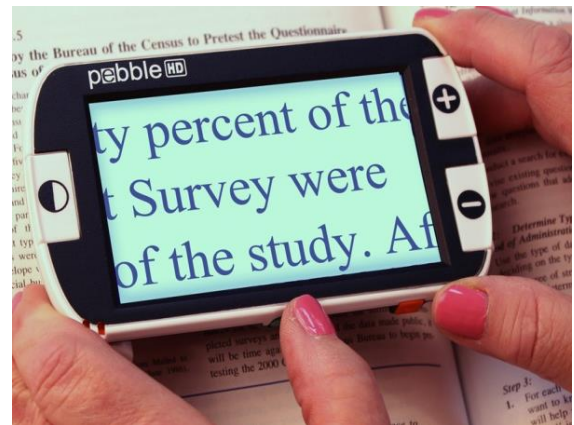
Other joint activities include participating in the Disability Summit at the Indian Learning Center in Pierre in July, with an audience of American Indians with disabilities, sponsored by Oun'iyekiyapi Vocational Rehabilitation Tribal Program. The 2016 Fall Conference, with topics relevant to culturally based service provision, included a luncheon with DRS and SBVI state office staff, VR Counselors, Tribal VR staff and Counselors, and the staff from the Independent Living Center that provides services on Native American reservations. There were also several visits made to Tribal VR programs in the state.



---

### **SBVI VR Program – Satisfaction Survey Analysis**

FFY 2016 marks the 8<sup>th</sup> year that SBVI has partnered with the Board of SBVI to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey using the SBVI Client Satisfaction Questionnaire-8 (CSQ-8) survey. The survey consists of eight core questions and an additional seven questions that were developed with the help of the Board of SBVI.



The survey was sent to 136 people who received services and were closed from the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program during the past year. Sixty surveys were returned for a response rate of forty-four percent which represents an increase from a forty-two percent response rate in FFY 2015. This information was sent to Dr. Alan Davis, Professor at South Dakota State University, who analyzes the data and provides SBVI with the results.

The overall consumer satisfaction mean was very high at 29.27 out of a possible 32, with a standard deviation of 4.45. Survey participants were asked directly "In an overall, general sense, how satisfied are you with the service you received?" Ninety-three percent of survey participants indicated they were very satisfied with the service they received from SBVI.

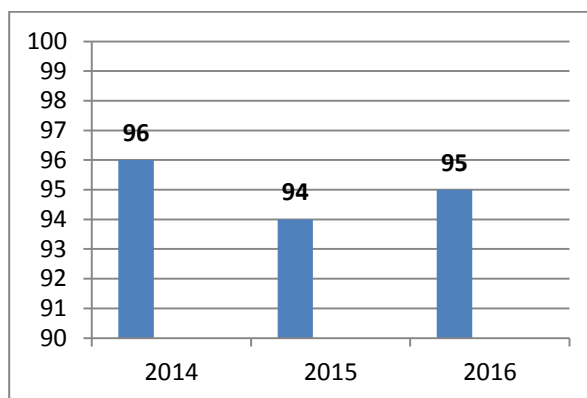
Demographics of the survey questionnaires indicated the respondents were predominately Caucasian, with sixty percent male and forty percent female respondents, and mostly over 55 years of age. This finding indicates that SBVI has response rates comparable to FFY 2013.

---

Following is a summary of the responses from the survey which indicate that the majority of the people are pleased with the services they receive from SBVI. This year, trend data was included in the summary to address current and recent consumer satisfaction over time:

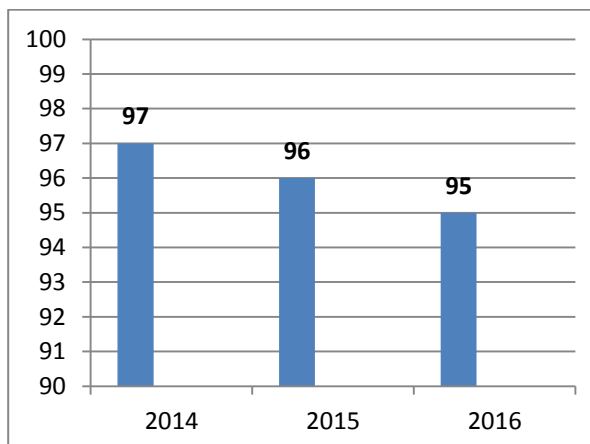
How would you rate the quality of service you received?

**Ninety-five percent of respondents answered “excellent” or “good”.**



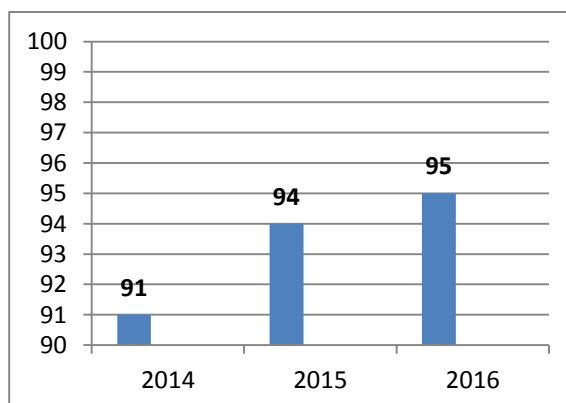
To what extent has our program met your needs?

**Ninety-five percent answered “almost all” or “most” of their needs had been met.**



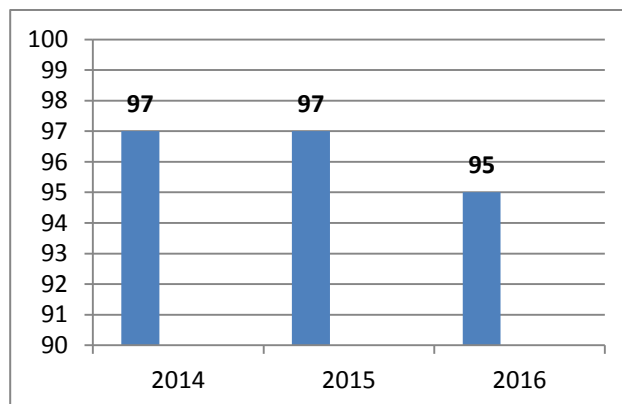
Have the services you received helped you to deal more effectively with your problems?

**Ninety-five percent answered “yes, they helped a great deal” or “yes, they helped somewhat”.**





If you were to seek help again, would you come back to our program?  
**Ninety-five percent answered “yes, definitely” or “yes, I think so”.**



---

To understand the impact of vocational rehabilitation, it is important to not only look at the program’s performance in terms of data, but also to see the comments people share. Below are some quotes received from the consumer satisfaction surveys:

- *“Wonderful person - Julaine - very nice - followed up with me and did everything she could to help me! Very professional and pleasant! Was already employed but had issues with my eyes.”*
- *“Lost job due to severe visual impairment, now retired, starting own business. Thank you very much for your services.”*
- *“Your team are such nice people; it's nice to feel welcome when troubles/struggles are on your mind. I am a lot better now knowing there was a fix for my eyes! I had lost hope when I found Julaine/DHS but now my self-esteem is so much better. I have a great deal more confidence. I can now have a larger variety of jobs due to this program. Thank you! Your team is a true blessing. Thank you Julaine.”*
- *“No improvement needed Kelly did a great job. I had a job already and Kelly helped me keep it and excel at it. I've had my two raises since. Thank you”*
- *“Very satisfied with everything. Got to keep job. Excellent, was very happy.”*
- *“I'm so grateful for what Dorthy Adams has done for me. I think she's an amazing little lady.”*
- *“I hadn't even realized the services were available, and I'm very happy to know that they did. Before I could not work at all, and now I'm employed full-time. SBVI also helped me to obtain surgery on both of my eyes.”*
- *“Needs have been met, and I think your services are great.”*

Additional comments from the survey can be found throughout this report.

---



---

## Overcoming Obstacles



Master Gardener, Mike Hommel, is shown with the garden he maintains to perfection south of Webster, South Dakota. Mike grew up on a farm southeast of Webster. At a young age, he began to enjoy the life of a farmer and appreciate growing produce, caring for livestock, and riding and caring for horses. On the farm, he was responsible for cutting hay, mechanical repairs, plumbing, fixing electrical malfunctions, carpentry, and forecasting the weather, as anyone from South Dakota knows a farmer must do to survive. Mike has been instrumental in starting the local Farmers Market in Webster. He has achieved many goals in his life despite obstacles presented by a diagnosis of retinitis pigmentosa, which causes loss of peripheral vision. He has since moved into town but continues to be very industrious and creative in

overcoming barriers to employment.

Mike hand-planted over 400 pounds of potatoes on a couple acres of his own land this past spring, and sells them out of his home. His reputation for delicious produce has been tested and approved by yours truly (Mike's VR Counselor). If you are passing through Webster, look for Mike's sign outside of his home on Main Street. Stop in and you'll find a tasty selection of produce perfect for your kitchen table. His friendly demeanor and a love for visiting with others will make your stop complete. Mike will tell you that vision loss is no excuse for not reaching for your goals, and finding ways to overcome the obstacles in front of you. He gets out every day and turns his passion for gardening and growing produce into cash in his pocket, and great table fare for his customers. Mike is an example of how a "can-do" attitude and hard work can pay off in the form of personal satisfaction in a job well done.



---

## **Independent Living Blind Program (ILB)**

The term "vision rehabilitation" includes a wide range of professional services that can restore functioning after vision loss, just as physical therapy restores function after a stroke or other injury. Vision rehabilitation services allow people who have recently lost vision, are blind, or have low vision, to continue to live independently and maintain their accustomed quality of life.

Although an eye doctor is the professional people likely turn to first when dealing with vision loss, it's important to note that many different kinds of vision rehabilitation services are available in addition to the eye medical care provided by your family doctor, ophthalmologist, optometrist, or low vision specialist.

Vision rehabilitation services from Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired can assist persons with vision impairments in the use of compensatory skills and assistive technology like the items pictured below enables them to live safe, productive, and independent lives.

Evaluation of an individual's skills and instruction in compensatory skills occurs in the home, assisted living facilities, and can also occur at long term care facilities if the individual is planning on returning home.

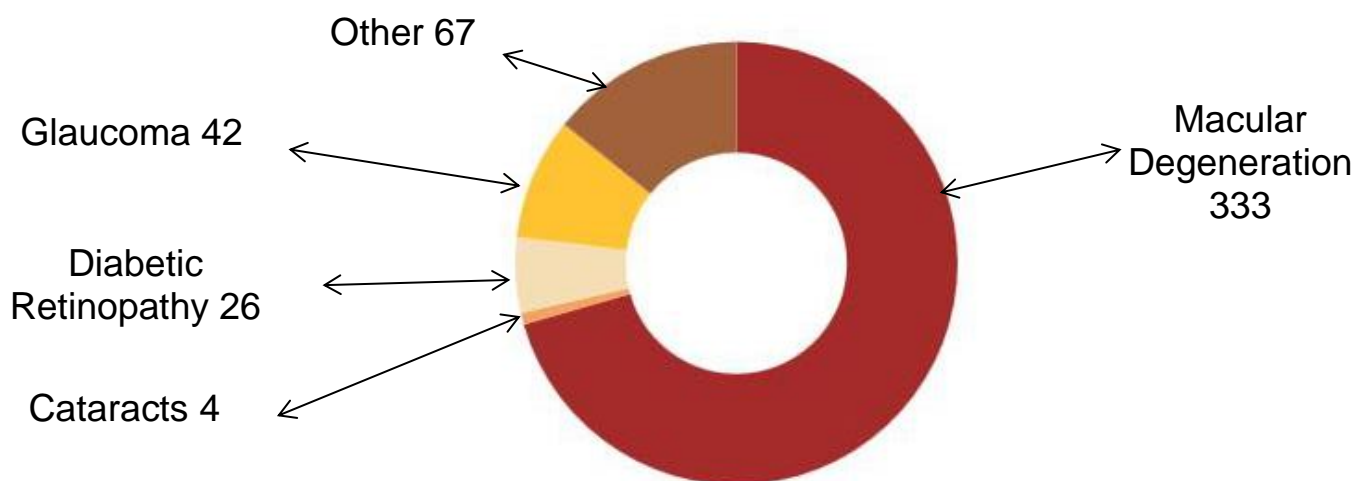


- In FY 2016, the ILB program provided services to 472 older blind individuals compared to 508 in FY 2015. Staff successfully closed 296 individual cases compared to 314 in FY 2015.
- In addition to providing services to older citizens who have severe vision loss, the ILB program provided services to 22 individuals under the age of 55 who required independent-living-skills training due to their vision loss.

Rehabilitation teaching combines and applies the best principles of adaptive rehabilitation, adult education, and social work to the following broad areas: home management, personal management, communication, activities of daily living (ADL), leisure activities and indoor or short distance orientation skills. The specialized teaching services listed below include simple devices and techniques that improve the individuals' quality of life. Services are planned and provided on an individual plan based on the person's needs, interests, and personal goals.

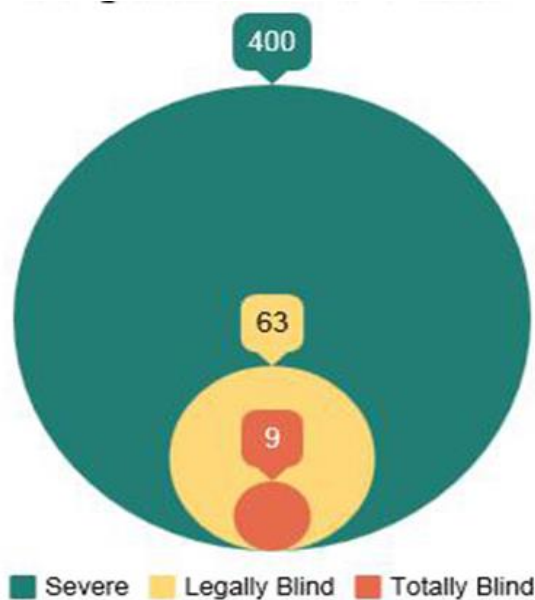
Type of Service and Description	Number of People
<b>Communication Skills</b> – Training in the use of the telephone, handwriting guides, telling time, reading or writing Braille, etc.	406
<b>Daily Living Skills</b> – Training in the use of adaptive aids and assistive technology for daily living.	376
<b>Low Vision Device Training</b> – Services related to the use of optical aids and devices.	401
<b>Low Vision Aids</b> – May include items such as canes, insulin gauges, CCTVs, magnifiers, adaptive cooking items, etc.	377
<b>Counseling</b> – Peer, individual, or group counseling to assist with adjustment to visual impairment and blindness.	359
<b>Low Vision Exams</b> – Evaluations to identify strategies and devices for enhancing visual performance.	236
<b>Advocacy Training</b> – Participation in advocacy training activities such as consumer organization meetings and peer support groups.	52
<b>Referral to Other Agencies</b> – Referral to other service providers, programs, and agencies.	313
<b>Orientation and Mobility</b> – Travel training and learning to access public or private transportation to travel safely and independently.	101

### Primary Types of Eye Disease for People Served



Macular Degeneration was the major cause of vision loss in 333 of the 472 individuals who received services in 2016, as reflected in this chart. According to Prevent Blindness America, South Dakota has an estimated 7,300 individuals with macular degeneration.

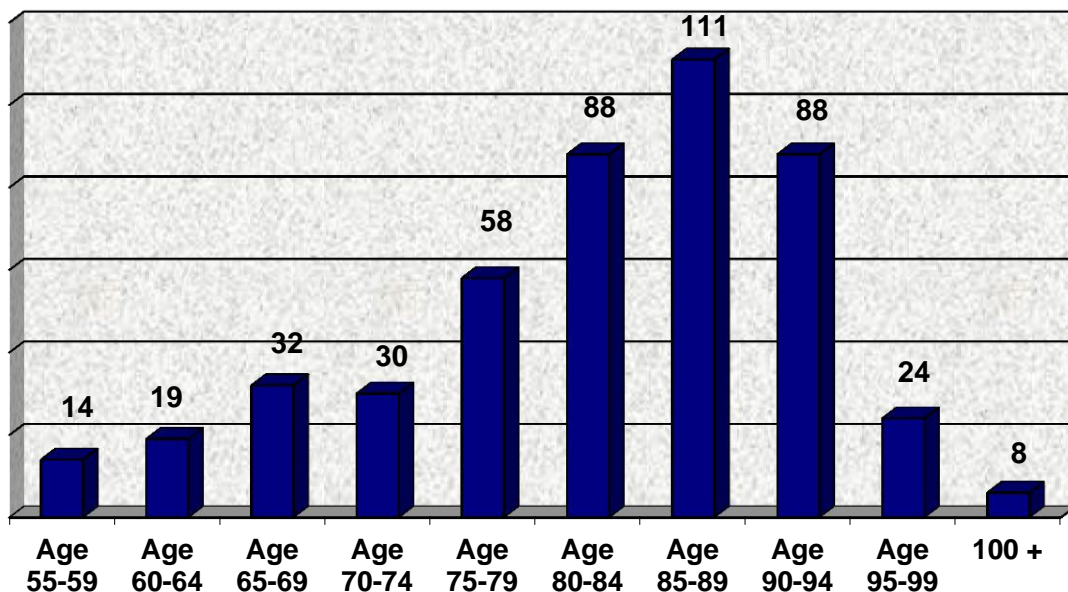




### Degree of Vision Loss

People experiencing vision loss through eye disease often fear total blindness. However, the majority of people with eye disease have some level of useable vision remaining which can be utilized to do activities of daily living. This chart demonstrates the number of people served in 2016, and the degree of vision loss they experienced.

### Age Range of ILB Individuals Served in FY 2016



The target population for the Independent Living Blind program is individuals over the age of 55. As reflected in this chart, in 2016, sixty-seven percent (319 individuals) of the 472 people served were over the age of 80, with 8 people over the age of 100.

*“My many thanks to all of you who help people who are visually impaired.”*

---

## Staying Positive is Key to Success



When I met with Elaine for the first time, she said “I am not going to let my vision loss take me down”. She figured she had overcome many obstacles in her lifetime at 88 years old and had always been able to maintain her independence in her home. She recently had given up her driver’s license, so time was spent on peer counseling to inform her of resources available in her community for transportation. She was struggling to read the

newspaper, mail and correspondence so we worked with magnification and she found that a CCTV and hand-held magnifiers enabled her to continue to read. She liked the Acrobat CCTV which helped her to see to put her make-up on. She was thrilled with how marks on her appliances helped her to set the temperature so she could continue her favorite activity of baking cookies. Services helped Elaine to feel confident that she can remain in her home thanks to all the resources and services available to her. Nancy Kelsey, Rehabilitation Teacher

---

## Satisfaction with Independent Living Services

Citizens who receive services from the ILB program have the opportunity to provide feedback through a satisfaction survey which is sent out quarterly. Survey responses assist SBVI to assess whether services are effective in assisting citizens to maintain or regain their independence. Two hundred forty seven surveys were sent out to those who achieved their independent living goals. One hundred fourteen people responded to the survey which is a 46% response rate. Frequently the survey responses include statements expressing gratitude for services. Following are some comments received:

- *“We were impressed with Nancy. She was very knowledgeable; it was a visit we looked forward to.”*
- *“Very pleased with all aspects of service.”*
- *“I am still able to take care of myself where I live, Chelle was great!”*
- *“Thank you for what you do; you have been very helpful.”*
- *“Thank you for a form large enough to read with the enhanced vision machine.”*
- *“My mom is now in a health care facility. Your program helped her stay in her apartment much longer than she would have otherwise. Nancy was very helpful & kind.”*
- *“I’m able to do my own bookwork because you helped me with magnifiers.”*
- *“Heather was great help to me in services offered and several items she gave to me help me see better.”*

A majority of the survey respondents agreed that as a result of Independent Living Services, they regained or improved their independence; they remained involved in activities in their home and community, gained skills or maintained their ability to walk safely around their home, and feel more confident because of the services they received.

A key question was whether they would have considered moving into a facility with a higher level of care without services from the ILB program. Of the 114 respondents, 46 individuals (forty percent) expressed they did not need to move to a facility that because of the special training and techniques taught to them by the rehabilitation teachers.

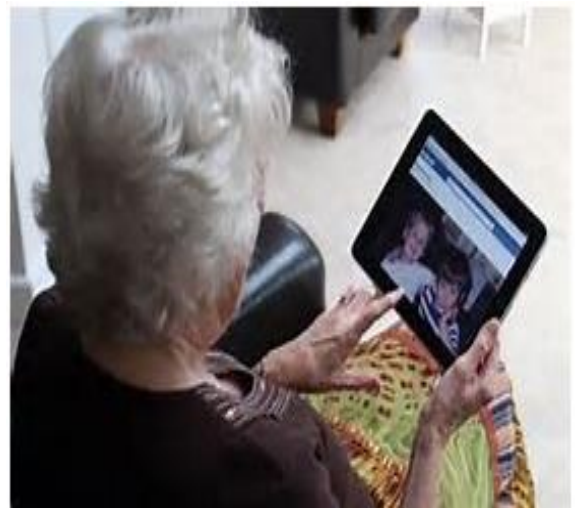
Satisfaction with services is sometimes best expressed through the heartfelt correspondence sent by those who have benefited from training. The following statement is just one example from 2016: *“Dear Ms. Neyhart, I have suffered from severe vision loss for many years. As an insulin-dependent diabetic for fifty-five years, I have experienced extreme vision loss because of diabetic retinopathy and laser treatments. I am so appreciative of the many services of your agency! I have been working with Heather who has provided me with large print information about the organization, as well as the many aids to enhance my vision. She is very personable, caring and knowledgeable about the products and services available. She has provided me with magnifiers, eyeglasses to enhance my long-distance vision and I’m going to lease a closed circuit television which will help me tremendously in drawing up my insulin, writing checks and reading. I am very grateful to Heather & SBVI!”*

---

### **Assistive Technology Access Project**

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired recognized that people with vision loss are often at a disadvantage when accessing information through their personal computers and handheld cellular devices. In October 2014, SBVI partnered with DakotaLink to create the Assistive Technology Access Project to provide instruction to use built-in accessibility options in personal computing devices. Adults and high school students with low vision or who are blind are eligible for the free individualized training with up to 5 hours of instruction per program participant. The project provides training to help people with vision loss maximize their ability to use their mobile devices, iPads, and computers.

Individuals referred to the Assistive Technology Access Project received direct contact with DakotaLink technicians who provided training and support in the individuals’ homes. Follow-up contacts were provided by the technicians to ensure the individuals were managing the newly acquired skills. A brief survey to assess the satisfaction of the trainees revealed positive comments regarding the impact of the project in meeting their needs. Twenty-seven people were surveyed, and their feedback resulted in offering additional hours of training based on each person’s individual needs. With 4 individuals still in training, this project boasts providing individualized training to 73



individuals on their mobile devices, iPads or computers in the last 2 years. SBVI did not purchase any equipment for individual use during the course of this project. Many of the individuals received free or low cost software or made independent and informed purchases, which helped them utilize their devices to maximum capacity.

---

### **Low Vision Training Leads to Successful Independence**

Roger was officially referred to the Independent Living Program by his eye doctor, but he had also heard of services from some friends at the local senior center in his town. Roger struggled with the daily visual changes that Glaucoma causes. He was open to accepting help and was an eager student when it came to learning about low vision skills and devices. Tactile markings and identification methods were provided and discussed, since seeing his bottles of eye drops and identifying other items around his home was difficult. Roger found the enlarged calendar helpful because he could see to write his appointments on it, and keep them separate from his wife's calendar. He was trained on different types of magnification to achieve his goal of reading print again. He enjoyed using the 3x Stand magnifier at his table to read his mail and the newspaper daily. The handheld magnifier was useful for other spot checking tasks around his home. The EasyPocket magnifier helped him with everyday tasks outside of his home. Yellow solar shields provided him the glare control he needed, especially for transitioning from indoors to outside. Roger was also able to see super jumbo playing cards, and now he and his wife can play cards together again - something they hadn't been able to do for quite a while. All of the items were provided to Roger by the funds available through the IL Program. Roger was able to maintain his independence through his involvement with the IL program and the training provided to him in his home.

Submitted by Amanda Schreck, Rehabilitation Teacher

---

### **Older Blind Peer Support Groups**

Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired maintains a network of peer support groups for older citizens who have vision loss. These groups meet on a monthly basis with volunteer leaders and participants who have a common experience related to vision loss. Through these peer support group meetings, members are able to share their individual experiences of vision loss, knowledge, and practical help with one another. During 2016, there were several noteworthy events these groups independently organized for their members. One event was a "Spring Fling" which was an indoor picnic and included a presentation from Bob Smith, Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist, on the importance of using a cane for traveling. This was organized by the volunteer leader, Kay Miller, along with several other group members who assisted with table arrangements and pick-up and delivery of food.





A second event was held in the Pierre community and included a special presentation from the Assistant Deputy Secretary of State on the importance of voting in the upcoming election. The *Your Vote Counts* event was organized by volunteer leader, Shirley English. The peer support group participants had an opportunity to use the AutoMark machine for accessible voting; and if needed, they were able to register to vote. An avenue for submitting their vote using absentee ballot was also created, which several people accessed.

The 12 of the Sturgis Area Peer Support Group attended the Black Hills Senior Information Network sponsored the Aging Gracefully Expo which brought together hundreds of participants from around the Black Hills. These support group members participated in a day of training that focused on proactive aging which helps to anticipate future needs and develop strategies to reduce barriers related to independence.

---

### **Public Outreach & Information and Referral**

Rehabilitation teachers provide information and referral services to the people of South Dakota by attending various community events such as: the South Dakota State Fair, community health fairs, employee in-service events, and other public forums.



In addition to these events, staff members respond to individual calls and home visits in a timely manner to ensure people obtain the information they need to access Independent Living and other services. In 2016, Rehabilitation Teachers provided information and referral services to 642 people and participated in 132 local events or presentations across the state. Participating in local events and providing SBVI information to potential applicants has paid off significantly in the past year, as 283 or 59 percent of the people served in 2016 were new program participants.

---

### **Electronic Video Magnification (CCTV) Lease/Loan Program**

SBVI created the CCTV Lease/Loan program in 2004, with memorial funds which were donated to the agency. The program started with 24 units as a start-up to help determine if we were addressing a need for older program participants who could not acquire the devices using insurance or Medicaid. The original styles of CCTVs were 20" Merlin units. The need for these magnification systems was immediately apparent and the demand for units required that the program be expanded. Within 2 years, SBVI purchased over 100 units and added a limited number of 15" Clarity models for people whose lifestyles were more mobile. The program has expanded the inventory over the years and now has over 200 CCTVs that are placed with older citizens with vision loss. The units may be leased for \$30 per month or loaned to



those who meet economic need criteria. Currently there are 85 units leased by individuals and 112 units on loan, which requires no monthly fee. CCTV units are seldom waiting to be placed with someone. Occasionally, we have created a waiting list for individuals which has fluctuated from 2 weeks to 3 months. In these instances, our offices often have “loaner” CCTVs to provide to people on a temporary basis.

Over the past 2 years, the inventory has been updated, and all of the units that were purchased from 2004-2006 have been replaced. The current inventory includes LCD HD Merlin models with screens that are 17”, 19”, 22”, and 24”. The 15” Clarity models have been replaced with the Acrobat HD Ultra LCD 20” closed circuit televisions. The newer units are lighter and the quality of magnified images has vastly improved.



In 2016, SBVI purchased 50 units in order to replace older units and increase the total units in the program. In an effort to meet a unique need for individuals who are not able to benefit from magnification due to the extent of their vision loss, SBVI expanded the selection to include 4 text to speech reading units with text to speech access. These models not only magnify but provide auditory output of the printed information.

---

### **Success Happens at Any Age**

Alice who is 102 years old and her husband Thomas, 104, received services from the SBVI Independent Living Program over the years. Alice participated in services again, this past year, as her vision continues to change due to macular degeneration. The mutual goal of the couple was to continue to remain on their family farm as long as possible. Alice utilizes bump dots that have been placed on her stove/oven, microwave and washing machine to manage the dials and continue to cook and do laundry. We started by trying stronger magnification devices and demonstrated a closed circuit television (CCTV) which they thought was wonderful. Thomas, whose vision has decreased enough that reading is very difficult, felt his wife deserved to get this machine to make life easier for both of them. She received a CCTV through the State Lease/Loan Program. She is now able to read the newspaper, mail, and correspondence for herself and Thomas. She had telephone numbers typed in large print so that she could easily contact her family and friends. Alice experienced a set back and broke her hip; but through rehabilitation, was able to return to the farm with Thomas. Submitted by Nancy Kelsey, Rehabilitation Teacher

---

---

# South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind



The SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC or Center) is a comprehensive training program in Sioux Falls, SD, that offers training in alternative techniques to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The program goal is to rebuild self-confidence and improve the quality of life for people experiencing life changing vision loss. Extensive training in skills of blindness results in students accomplishing activities of daily living independently. Skills taught at the Center include independent travel (orientation and mobility), computers with assistive technology, home management, communications, and alternative non-sighted techniques to problem-solve life's challenges with no or reduced sight.

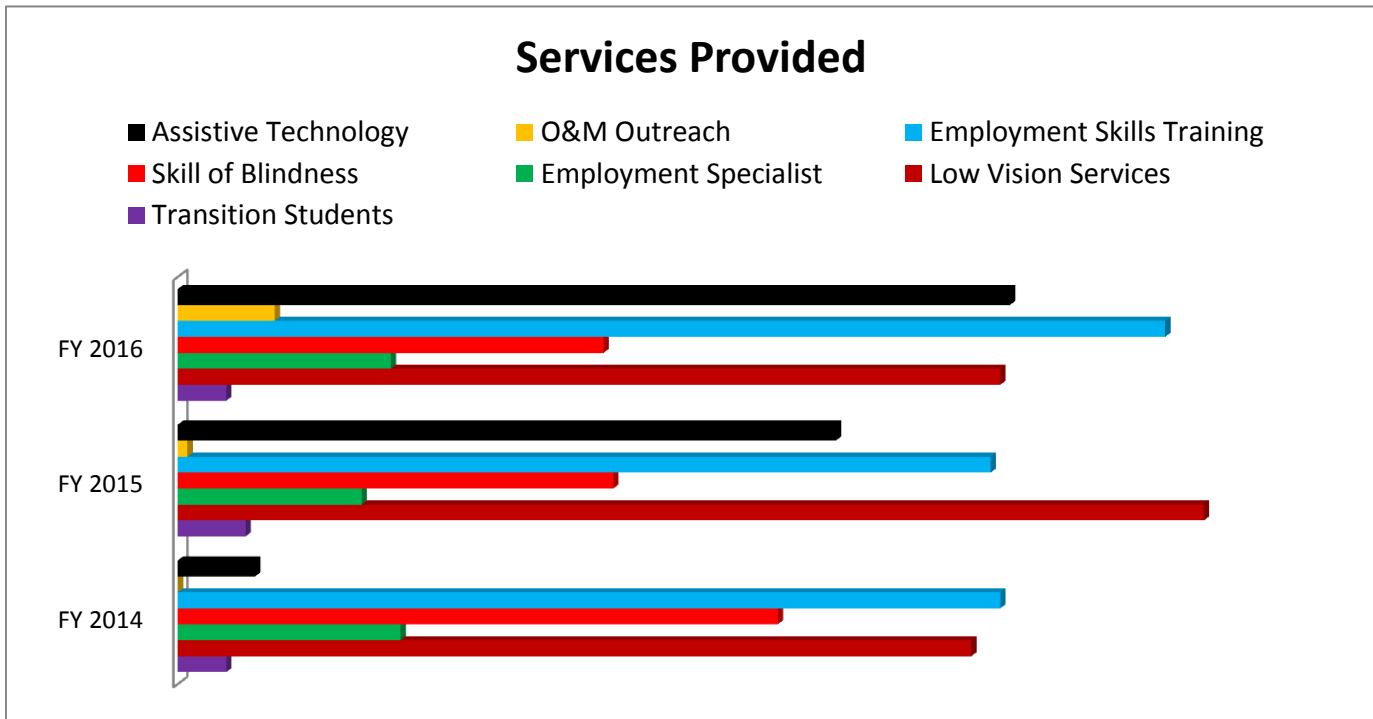
The people who attend training bring a variety of life experiences. Some have acquired a vision loss from a brain injury; stroke; or eye diseases such as diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataracts, etc. Some have congenital visual conditions and have always experienced low vision or blindness. Students get individual attention and goals are set according to their interests. Peer support through interactions with other people in training helps students to engage socially and improves their self-esteem.

During FY 2016, the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind provided services to 249 people. Training in the skills of blindness occurs daily Monday through Friday, with community activities available some evenings and weekends. Students meet with teachers individually or in small groups to learn skills to improve their ability to live independently with vision loss. Communications class offers instruction on low tech and non-sighted methods to identify money, use writing guides, tell time, read Braille, adapt a game, and options to access materials using alternative techniques. Home Management class enhances student's ability to perform



daily living tasks. They learn cooking techniques, cleaning patterns, grocery shopping, laundry skills, and whatever it takes for someone to reach their goals. Orientation and Mobility teaches students independent travel for those with low vision or no sight. Training is determined by the individual's unique needs. Options range from walking down a rural gravel road to riding a city bus in Sioux Falls. The Computers and Assistive Technology class offers instruction in specialized programs

and adaptive equipment to allow access to a computer or other devices. Training is planned based on each student's unique needs and interests. Training duration varies from a few weeks to several months and even up to a full year. Many students return for training due to a decrease in vision or based upon their schedules. The skills developed through participating in training lead to greater independence, which builds confidence and results in the ability to maintain or obtain employment.



<b>SDRC Services</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>
Transition Students	5	7	5
Low Vision Services	82	106	85
Employment Specialist	23	19	22
Skills of Blindness	62	45	44
Employment Skills Training	85	84	102
O&M Outreach	-	1	10
Assistive Technology and Technical Assistance	8	68	86
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>354</b>

SDRC experienced an increase of 25 students in 2016, compared to 2015. The increase is primarily due to more people participating in employment skills training, and assistive technology training and/or technical assistance.



---

## Satisfaction Surveys

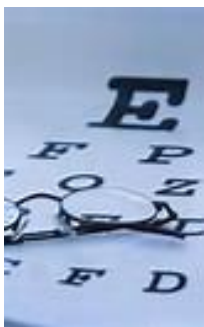
Every individual receiving vocational rehabilitation services and attending SDRC is asked to complete a Satisfaction Survey. Surveys are provided to people the last day of training so they can accurately reflect on the services. The rating scale is between 1 and 4 from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4), as well as NA- Not Applicable. All ratings received in 2016 fell into the high end of Agree; no ratings were in the category of Disagree. The two highest ratings were 3.86 regarding the questions “I was able to talk openly about my vision loss; Staff was available when I needed to talk to them,” and “I am pleased with the overall outcome of my experience.” The lowest rating was regarding two questions; “Home Management helped me function more independently in my home or apartment” rated 3.55 and Home Mechanics rated 3.56 with the question “Home Mechanics helped me learn independence in home repairs.” Both fall within the category of Agree and are only slightly lower than the highest rating of 3.86. The narrative portion gathers comments about the services. Some of the comments regarding what they liked best were:

- *“The staff was very knowledgeable and approachable.”*
- *“I learned a lot about Orientation and Mobility, which was the purpose of the training.”*
- *“I feel I will be better prepared when I start school.”*
- *“I learned there are other people out there struggling and going through the same stuff I am.”*

There were limited responses to the question about what they liked least. Answers to this question included: “Didn’t like it at first but got better when you started learning;” “Being away from home for so long.” The majority of responses to this question were “nothing” or “liked it.”

---

## Low Vision Services



People who struggle with reading often search for magnifying devices to assist them with their reduced visual acuity. They are often referred to SD Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired by eye doctors, physicians, or friends and family. A staff person then makes an appointment for them to attend the Low Vision Clinic at SDRC, where they receive an eye examination by an optometrist who specializes in prescribing low vision equipment. A low vision examination differs from a normal eye examination because it goes further into the diagnosis of appropriate adaptive devices to allow people to read, see items further away, reduce glare, enhance contrast, and find visual solutions to do the things they like to do. In FY 2016, 85 people attended 18 clinics and the average age was 67. The Low Vision Clinic tends to serve patients over 65 years of age due to the number of older citizens with macular degeneration. This year, 56 percent of the people attending the clinic were older blind and 44 percent were of working age.

---

---

## Transition Services



During the summer months, provision of pre-employment transition services is a priority for SDRC due to the increase of transition age youth participating in training. South Dakota Vocational Resources implemented a Transition Services class to provide instruction and opportunities for transition age students attending Skills of Blindness. Students engaged in career exploration activities, self-advocacy discussions, lessons on appropriate social skills, and exploration of post-secondary education options. Staff used SD Mylife, ONet, Skills to Pay the Bills, as well as other evidence based interactive curriculums to enlighten the

students and assist them to begin planning post high school activities. Students participated in a career exploration scavenger hunt at the Empire Mall. To help transition students set employment and post-secondary goals, Person Centered Transition Assessments are offered.

During an Integrated Resource Team Meeting, the Department of Labor Workforce Training Team presented information about their summer pilot project for youth. Summer Passport Opportunities classes included guest speakers, activities, games, peer relationships, and leadership opportunities. Classes were held every Thursday with different topics to explore career opportunities to prepare students to succeed in the workplace and learn about adult responsibilities. Skills of Blindness transition students and staff collaborated with the workforce training team to ensure presentations and materials were accessible. Students appreciated classes on professional communication, volunteer opportunities, real life school skills and online job searches.



“Step into the Future” was the theme for Transition Week, held June 26 - 30. Activities during the week provided experiences for the students so that they have a better understanding of what options are available to them after completing high school. Students toured several local businesses including Chesterman Coca-Cola and the South Dakota Business Enterprise Program cafeteria at the Earth Resources and Observation Science Center, where they discussed job modifications, self-advocating in the workplace, and interviewing skills for applicants with visual impairments. Students also attended a panel discussion with several visually impaired individuals who have pursued post-secondary education. The panelists emphasized the importance of on-site disability services and gave students tips on navigating the college experience.

An afternoon at the Science Center at the Washington Pavilion gave the students the opportunity to explore their areas of interest in science, technology, engineering,

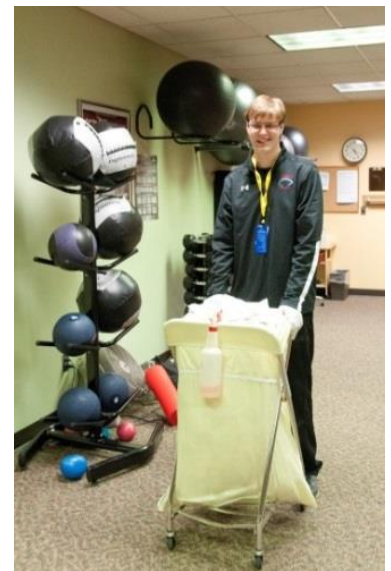
and math. Students also spent a day in the SDRC Skills of Blindness classes, where they prepared a meal, learned about assistive technology and communication devices, and discussed all of the services offered at the Center which can be accessed as they proceed through transition and beyond.

The week concluded with a Resource Day, where students and parents had a chance to gather information and communicate with representatives from a variety of programs including South Dakota Parent Connection, South Dakota Department of Labor, Independent Living Choices, and SBVI Rehabilitation Counselors. Round table discussions also included a Benefits Specialist, an Employment Specialist, Disability Coordinator and an Admissions Specialists from a university and technical institute. Positive and informative connections were developed.

---

### **South Dakota Vocational Resources**

Employment Skills Training (EST) assisted 102 people in 2016, an increase of 18 from 2015. Employment Skills Training is available to eligible individuals with a variety of disabilities in addition to blindness and provides evaluation and training in job skills including: computer instruction, World of Work classes, job skills training, assessment of skills, as well as training on employer's expectations and job search assistance (resume' preparation, GED attainment, etc.). Job placement services assist people with disabilities to find employment that meets their unique interests and strengths. South Dakota Vocational Resources has an employment specialist who is knowledgeable about the needs of businesses so that he can assist those participating in EST to obtain employment.



---

### **Success Story - William Maxwell**



When William first arrived at SDRC in July of 2015, he could easily be identified by anyone and everyone with his bright Superman shirts and booming voice that echoed throughout the halls. William, age 31, was blind with no light perception in both of his eyes. When Alan Vandenburg, SBVI Senior Rehabilitation Counselor, referred William to the Center, he had no skills of blindness, a homeschool education, and was almost entirely dependent on the assistance of his family. With limited opportunities to do things on his own, he relied on a guide to get him from his place of residence to a vehicle

and to his destination each time he wanted to venture out. William arrived at the Center with a great deal of anxiety, distrust, and fear, as anyone grappling a major life change might experience. But with the assistance and encouragement of both his family and the staff at SDRC, William quickly grew ready to face independence head-on. William spent from July 2015 to June 2016 in Skills of Blindness classes.



He was wary at first and reluctant to attempt unfamiliar and uncomfortable orientation and mobility cane travel skills. In Home Management, he had no interest in trying his hand at making new foods.

Eventually, William became one of the most dedicated students at SDRC. In Communications, he learned the Braille alphabet and typed his class schedule in Braille each week. While learning to use assistive technology, he practiced typing and learned how to navigate the Internet to learn about his favorite subject, cars. William began to use an iPhone, provided to him by the Telecommunications Adaptive Device program. William's commitment to his attendance allowed him to gain new skills. When William learned all the skills he needed to increase his independence, it was obvious that he had undergone a complete turnaround. He was utilizing his cane, eating healthy, had joined a gym, and all who know him could tell he had experienced a great increase in confidence.

Upon completion of the Skills of Blindness, William began training in the Employment Skills Training area at the Center. At this point he started thinking seriously about getting a job and began preparing himself to join the workforce. He was ready to be successful and started dressing for the part. No more sport jerseys and Superman shirts, they were replaced with dress shirts and slacks. William carried himself differently as he learned new skills. Mary Tommeraasen, Employment Skills Supervisor, created a towel folding task, which she used to challenge his ability to work efficiently and effectively. He worked with his peers confidently, sharing his experience and teaching the tasks he had learned to others.

William began meeting with an Employment Specialist and soon found employment. William began working 20 hours a week under the state Employment Skills Training program in the laundry of the Ramkota Inn, earning \$8.55 an hour. Bob Smith, SDRC Program Specialist, met William several times at work to assist with on-site orientation and mobility training. He now utilizes Sioux Falls paratransit independently to get to work and around the city. William's experience is a testament to the fact that anyone can gain the independence they desire if they are willing to work hard. As a result of William's hard work, his training is nearing an end, and he has been hired permanently at the Ramkota Inn.

---

---

## **Business Enterprise Program**

The SBVI Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is designed to provide the opportunity for self-employment in food service for qualified legally blind individuals. In South Dakota, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is the state licensing agency (SLA). The SLA recruits, trains, and licenses legally blind individuals interested in and eligible to participate in the BEP.

Currently, there are four vendors in the program located in Aberdeen, Yankton, Huron, and Pierre. The BEP has a vacancy at a federal facility near Sioux Falls. Arrangements are being made to operate this facility as a satellite site. The BEP will establish a blind vendor operator to run the facility with local staff to assist.

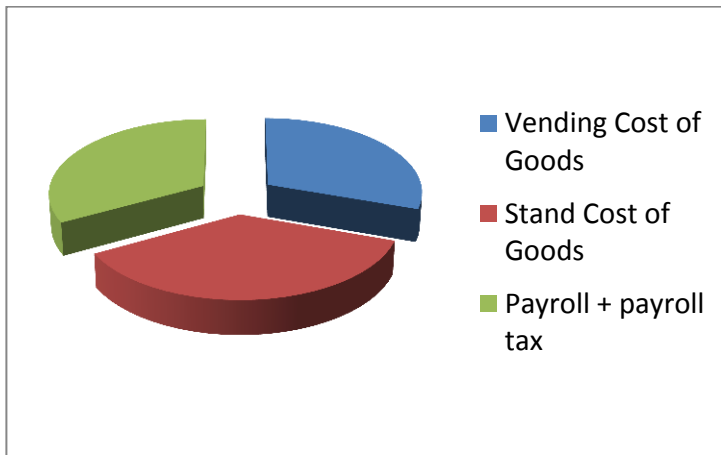
At the present time, BEP owns 53 vending machines. These machines include hot beverage, cold beverage, snack, and combination machines. Six new machines were purchased this year to replace older machines for which parts were no longer available for repair. Two new machines were also purchased to expand vending at a new location on a vending route in Huron.



Vending machines purchased for a new location for one of the blind vendor's vending route.

---

## Business Enterprise Program



Vending Cost of Goods - \$101,712.71

Stand Cost of Goods - \$122,926.32

Payroll + Payroll Tax - \$110,750.60

Total - \$335,425.63

This chart illustrates the 3 major expenditures the vendor operators incurred in FFY 2016. Vending cost of goods purchased is 30 percent stand costs are 36.6 percent and payroll is 33 percent of major costs.

Following is a breakdown of sales and net profits earned by BEP vendors.

Earnings and Expenses	2014	2015	2016
1) Gross Sales (total income)	\$505,011	\$446,428	\$449,385
2) Merchandise Purchases	\$280,809	\$241,596	\$246,962
3) Gross Profit	\$224,202	\$204.832	\$202,422
4) Total Operating Expenses	\$125,304	\$101,523	\$137,624
5) Net Proceeds	\$114,277	\$115,561	\$75,060
6) Levied Set Aside Funds	\$14,469	\$15,102	\$12,130
7) Net Profit to Vendors	\$99,808	\$100,460	\$62,929

Through an agreement with the SD Department of Transportation, the BEP is responsible for vending at the South Dakota interstate rest areas. Revenue from commissions on cold drink sales at the rest areas along Interstates 90 and 29 are a major source of funding for BEP.

Based on the SD Interstate Rest Area Revitalization Plan developed by the Departments of Transportation and Tourism, the Tilford and Hidewood Rest Areas were closed effective November 1. Various other rest areas will become welcome centers in the future.

Vendor operators are expanding their businesses and vending routes, and are operating a high number of machines for the state. With South Dakota holding the lowest unemployment rate in the country, vendor operators have been challenged with hiring and retaining qualified staff to assist them with their businesses.

---

## Anyone Can Do Anything



Pam Fisher is a persistent force to be reckoned with, who has a “Can Do” attitude. She has been the General and Training Manager at Wendy’s, a fast food restaurant in Rapid City for the past 21 years, and just happens to be legally blind with a progressive condition that will lead to total blindness.

At age 15, Pam had lyme disease and was diagnosed with pars planitis and cataracts in both eyes. Pars planitis or uveitis is a chronic inflammatory disease that affects the ciliary body of the eyes. Cataracts are a cloudiness of the crystalline lens that blurs the vision and progresses in density until removed. About 6 years ago, Pam was also diagnosed with a hereditary condition called retinitis pigmentosa that will lead to total blindness and closed angle glaucoma, both affecting her peripheral vision until she is down to 5 degrees, 2 degrees, and then, nothing. It is like looking through a pin hole in a black piece of paper. Pam knew there had to be a better way and contacted Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired to get help as her vision continued to decrease. Pam needed to learn adaptive ways to function so she could maintain her job and her independence at home and in the community.

SBVI went to Wendy’s and did a situational assessment of every aspect of her job to come up with solutions to allow Pam to adapt to her environment. Through our agency, Pam acquired independence by learning how to use a white cane through orientation and mobility training. Her computer became accessible through adaptive technology in the form of a speech and large print program where Pam could hear and see to do orders, inventory, read e-mail and do other paper work required for her job. Pam learned memory techniques that helped her with the cash register, how to identify money, and patterns of cleaning. Pam learned how to pour, use her sense of touch, count steps to reach certain areas and use protective gloves for frying french fries and other food products. In the freezer, colored sticky notes were placed on boxes to make it easier to identify the contents. Adaptive technology doesn’t cost as much as people think. Often, the cost is less than \$50; it just takes creativity and identifying ways to provide innovative solutions to the challenges.

Pam believes “anyone can do anything” if they want to, and she plans to maintain her career and be an active member of her community. Even though Pam has a disability, Wendy’s gave her a chance to achieve her vocational goal. Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired gave Pam the tools and resources to succeed; Pam was motivated enough to take advantage of this. In addition to her vocational success, Pam and her husband, Matthew, have a son who is 11/2 years of age and are expecting a baby girl in the spring.

---

## Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired Offices

<u>SBVI State Office</u> Gaye Mattke, Division Director 3800 E. Hwy 34 c/o 500 East Capitol Pierre, SD 57501-5070 Phone/TTY: (605) 773-4644 Fax: (605) 773-5483 Toll Free: 1-800-265-9684	<u>SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind</u> Dawn Backer, Manager 2900 West 11th Street, Suite 101 Sioux Falls, SD 57104 Phone/TTY: (605) 367-5260 Fax: (605) 367-5263 Toll Free: 1-800-658-5441
<u>Aberdeen Office</u> 1707 4th Avenue SE, Suite A Aberdeen, SD 57401 Phone/TTY: (605) 626-2395 Fax: (605) 626-3089 Toll Free: 1-800-439-3417	<u>Rapid City Office</u> 2330 N. Maple, Suite 2 Rapid City, SD 57701 Phone/TTY: (605) 394-2253 FAX: (605) 394-1659 Toll Free: 1-800-439-8861
<u>Sioux Falls Office</u> 811 East 10 Street, Dept. 22 Sioux Falls, SD 57103-1650 Phone/TTY: (605) 367-5330 Fax: (605) 367-5327 Toll Free: 1-800-265-9679	<u>Pierre Office</u> 912 E Sioux Ave c/o 500 E Capitol Pierre, SD 57501-5070 Phone/TTY: (605) 773-3318 Fax: (605) 773-5161 Toll Free: 1-877-873-8500

For more information go to the SBVI web site at:  
<http://dhs.sd.gov/servicetotheblind/default.aspx>

